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ABSTRACT

For several years, the "systems" metaphor has guided organizational communication research. Recently, however, a sizable number of management and organizational communication scholars have explored another guiding metaphor--that of organizational culture. Present notions of organizational culture tend to focus on static, structural features of culture, and current research is often content to document the existence of such cultural features as organizational jargon, stories, ideologies, and strategic knowledge. Such a focus, although valuable, overlooks the cultural processes by which these structures are created, maintained, and transformed. Process notions can be introduced into the understanding of organizational culture by examining organizational communication as cultural performance. A look at five such performances described in current literature--performances of ritual, passion, sociality, politics, and enculturation--reveals that these are auspicious starting places for empirical research. (Author/FL)

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Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance

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Mr. Pacanowsky is an Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, University of Utah. Mr. O'Donnell-Trujillo is a doctoral candidate, Department of Communication, University of Utah. This paper is truly a collaborative effort, and assigning "first" and "second" authorship is decidedly problematic. The "organizational culture" approach described here is one that Mr. Pacanowsky has been intensively involved in developing, and the notion of communicative performance as an integrative feature of organizational culture was initially conceived of by him. The conceptualization of communicative performance presented here is a result of extensive interaction between the two authors; Mr. O'Donnell-Trujillo is primarily responsible for its articulation in this essay.

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ABSTRACT

For the past ten to fifteen years, the "systems" metaphor has guided organizational communication research. Recently, however, a sizable number of management and organizational communication scholars have suggested a different guiding metaphor--that of organizational culture. Present notions of organizational culture, however, tend to focus on static, structural features of culture, and current research is often content to document the existence of such cultural features as organizational jargon, stories, ideologies, and strategic knowledge. Such a focus, though valuable, overlooks the cultural processes by which these structures are created, maintained, and transformed. We argue in this paper that we can introduce process notions into our understanding of organizational culture by looking at organizational communication as cultural performances. We examine five cultural performances described (often obliquely) in current organizational literature--performances of ritual, "passion," sociality, politics, and enculturation--and we suggest that these performances are auspicious starting places for empirical research. We conclude with a discussion of the different nature of the research questions implicated in a switch from a "systems" to a "cultural" metaphor of organizations.

Organizational Communication as Cultural Performances

In her book Philosophy in a New Key, Suzanne Langer provides an evolutionary account of certain bursts of intellectual activity that come, in time, to find their way into every nook and cranny of the scholarly community.[1] Each burst is some grande idee, a novel conceptualization so powerful that its promise spreads beyond the boundaries of the discipline that gave it birth. Its promise lies in its metaphorical fullness, and the best and brightest scholars in various disciplines will feel compelled to work feverishly to see how far the metaphor can be stretched, to use the metaphor to learn what unsolved puzzles can be rendered sensible, to see how much new knowledge can be squeezed out of it. For the study of organizational communication, systems theory was such a grande idee.

In the late 60s and early 70s, systems theory had captured the attention of the scholarly world. Von Bertalanffy and Buckley were standard reading.[2] Input, output, feedback, and environment were the new buzz words. And although scholars in nearly all disciplines were calling for a "systems view" of their worlds, the call for a systems view of organizational communication was particularly loud and insistent. And for good reason. The study of organizational communication is not so much the study of one phenomenon, but of two--organizations and communication. The beauty of the systems metaphor, the particular hope it extended, lay in the fact that both phenomena--organizations and communication--were finding corresponding expression in systems terminology. That is, the systems metaphor seemed to provide a "fit" or, at least, a way of fitting these two phenomena together. Thus, communication

became the act of transferring, processing, and storing subsystem or environmental information, and organizations became information processing systems. Feedback, signals, goals, cybernetic control--all became part of a common vocabulary for the articulation and elaboration of ideas about both organizations and communication. With systems theory, we had a guiding metaphor that promised to bring to fruition Chester Bernard's oft-quoted assertion that, "in any exhaustive theory of organization, communication would occupy a central place."[3]

But, as so often happens, the metaphorical power of an idea has varying actual utility. Where computer scientists and other technicians working with "smart" machines could make great strides using "systems thinking," organizational communication scholars could not. Although the calls for using the systems approach continued, questions were now being raised. Weick groused that "too many investigators think they have said something important when they assert that 'an organization is an open system.'"[4] Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, themselves attracted to systems theory, darkly noted the lack of any actual research-generated knowledge.[5] Although a few scholars pointed the way to potentially appropriate methodologies--markov models, lagged sequential analysis, time series analysis--few actually committed their energies to learning or using these methods. Systems theory sputtered. Calls for a systems approach became less frequent, then changed to well-wrought critiques, and finally were replaced by calls for altogether new ways of doing organizational communication research.[6]

Systems theory, however, has left us with two important legacies. First, systems theory has taught us the value of complicating our thinking about organizations. Organizations are occasionally "tightly coupled," but more

often, organizations are "loosely coupled."[7] No longer do we expect simple cause-and-effect relationships to account for much of importance in organizational functioning. In fact, so contingent and equifinal are organizations that it may make more sense to think of them as contexts, rather than any set (no matter how large) of causal equations. Second, systems theory has taught us the merit of looking for guiding metaphors of such nature that they address and bring into correspondence our thinking about both organizations and communication.

We believe that the particular potential of the organizational culture metaphor lies in its ability to liberate and illuminate our thinking about both organizations and communication. Anthropologically considered, communication is not information transfer, but language use. And organizations are not to be seen as computer-like machines, but rather more like tribes. What we want to do in this paper is to work out the correspondence between organizations and communication that is implied in the organizational culture metaphor. First, we note that most theorizing about organizational culture presents us with a rather static notion of culture and communication, and we suggest that the notion of "communicative performance" allows us to more fully exploit our understanding of communication as a process and culture as a social construction continually re-constructed. Second, by combining anecdotes taken from our own work in organizational culture research with suggestive material from both management and organizational communication literatures, we want to explore in a most preliminary way some of the "communicative performances" typical in today's organizations. Finally, we want to address the nature of the research questions implicated by this cultural metaphor of organizational communication.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES AND COMMUNICATIVE PERFORMANCES

"Organizational culture" is a phrase relatively new to the discussion of organizations and organizational communication.[8] As organizational scholars have rediscovered and begun re-using qualitative methodologies in their research,[9] they have come to appreciate the unique "sense of the place" that each organization seems to offer. Each organization has its own way of doing what it does, and its own way of talking about what it is doing, and to the outside researcher, there is no phrase more felicitous in capturing what is both so unique yet so "natural" to the insiders as "culture."

To date, there is little in the literature that represents a full-blown analysis of the culture of some organization. Most work on "organizational cultures" has been, like this paper, conceptual in nature. The authors have attempted to spell out those features of "organizational culture" that can be profitably examined, and in so doing, they haved hoped to build a theoretical base from which empirical research into organizational cultures can proceed. Thus, Dandridge and others concern themselves with organizational symbols, Wilkins with organizational stories, Koch and Deetz with organizational metaphors, Meyer with organizational ideologies, and Bormann (following Clark) with organizational sagas.[10] The weakness with this focus, as we see it, is that in each case, the emphasis is on some structural feature of culture, without sufficient consideration given to how those features manifest themselves in the everyday interactions of the organizational members.[11] This comment is not meant to disparage in any way the importance of work on symbols, stories, metaphors, ideologies, or sagas. But, if culture is, as Geertz suggests, "webs of significance that man himself has spun,"[12] and if, as we have suggested elsewhere, spun webs imply some act of spinning,[13] then we need

to concern ourselves not only with the structures of cultural webs, but with the process of their spinning as well. We need to ask ourselves how these specific symbols, stories, metaphors, ideologies, and sagas with their particular displays of culture came to be.

It is easy enough to answer that cultural structures come into being through processes of communication. The problem with this assertion is not that it's wrong (because it isn't), but that it's not helpful. To speak of generalized processes of communication is to conjure up images of unpunctuated streams of discourse that have no beginning and no end. It is to provide a conceptualization of communication so thick and ubiquitous as to be analytically inaccessible. It is, at the last, to render the idea of "communication as process" meaningless, and to locate all meaning in structural residues. To ease our way out of this difficulty, we suggest that scholars of organizational culture consider communication in organizations as cultural "performances."

The idea of "performance" has two somewhat different connotations;[14] both of which, however, are relevant to considerations of organizational communication. The first notion of performance, one made particularly popular by Erving Goffman, suggests theatricality and play-acting.[15] This notion of performance implies that some organizational performances are overdone (for example, when the departmental chairman rips at his hair on the occasion of the dean's announcement of the new budget), and that all organizational performances may be suspected as being displays of role-distancing and presentations of organizationally-required masks (for example, when the company purchasing agent is a "bureaucratic tyrant" at work, but "just a nice neighbor who takes good care of his lawn" at home).

The second notion of performance allows perhaps an even deeper meaning for the term. Etymologically, as Victor Turner has pointed out, performance "is derived from the...Old French parfournir--par ("thoroughly") plus fournir ("to furnish")-- hence, performance does not necessarily have the structural implication of manifesting form, but rather the processual sense of 'bringing to completion' or 'accomplishing.'"[16] It is in this sense of "bringing to completion" or "accomplishing" that organizational performances are most creative, because it is in this sense that performance brings the significance or meaning of some structural form--be it symbol, story, metaphor, ideology, or saga--into being. We now consider more fully these two senses of the notion of "performance."

Theatricality in Organizational Life

The notion of "theatricality" in organizational life suggests some interesting assumptions and terms for looking at organizational communication. From Goffman's discussions of stages, fronts, and impressions, the notion of theatricality invites one to look at each organization as a stage, and at the organizational members as so many actors with varied parts, roles, masks, and scenes to play.

The theatricality of performances suggests that organizational members are choice-making individuals. Organizational members do not "conform" to behavioral laws, but rather act (or more precisely, choose to act) in ways which reflect (or flout) the social conventions of other organizational members. Admittedly, there are some organizational "scripts," but even these scripts do not bind the organizational member to an inflexible performance. Indeed, the performance of these scripts varies among organizational members,

and varies for the same actor as he plays in different scenes to different audiences. Thus, the boss and the secretary may treat the auditor politely but differently, while even the boss's performance of "politeness" will vary depending on who the performance is for--his boss, the auditor, or the secretary. Thus, the notion of theatricality not only suggests a break from more mechanistic views of organizational communication, it additionally suggests that organizational communication is situationally relative and variable.

We should note that this variability of performance has led some critics to a cynical view of theatricality. Such cynicism is largely in response to Goffman's position that people perform differently in order to manage others' impressions of them. These critics say that Goffman's dramaturgy suggests a disenchanted and somewhat amoral view of society with conceptions of "humanity as the big con," the "reduction of humanity to an act or performance," and "the''phony' element" in all performances.[17] Moreover, these critics argue that "managed" performances are inauthentic and superficial, and that Goffman's way of writing about them glorifies and even encourages people to manipulate impressions to their advantage.

It seems to us that there are two legitimate responses to this criticism. The first is to agree with it, to treat organizational communication as open to discussion of moral concerns, and to encourage "distortion-free" modes of communication in organizational life.[18] This is the path taken by those Burrell and Morgan have called "radical humanists."[19] The second response is to admit that people in organizations indeed may be "inauthentic" at times--like when members cover for each other--and may be "superficial" at times--like when members "small talk" with customers--but that such performances do not necessarily call for pejorative assessment, but for understanding. Although "telling one person one thing and another person something else" might

be considered immoral (particulary if we believe that truth is not so elastic as to be stretched in this way), to act "tactfully" or "empathically" or "sensitively"--all typically thought of as moral performances--similarly may require one to "stretch the truth" and tell one person one thing and another person something else. Thus, this view of "managed" performances does not necessarily indict organizational communication as morally bankrupt, but instead again suggests that organizational communication is situationally relative and variable. The directive, then, is not to look for and classify performances as "inauthentic" or "authentic," or as "superficial" or "real," but rather to examine closely the variability of communicative performances as they occur in organizational life. Those performances which seem to "contradict" each other, or those performances which seem a bit "melodramatic," do not necessarily discredit the communication but instead display it as more textured and requiring perhaps a bit more effort to understand.

Bringing Organizational Reality into Being

When Victor Turner reminds us that performance is derived from the Old French parfournir--to furnish competely and thoroughly--he refurbishes the concept with a richness long forgotten by those who view performance as mere pretense. Indeed, Turner argues that performances are those very actions by which members constitute and reveal their culture to themselves and to others. Performances are not inauthentic nor superficial; they are the very things which bring to completion a sense of reality.[20]

Turner is in good company when he asserts the importance of performances as actions which constitute reality. Many scholars have argued that reality is not just like a drama but rather is a drama and that performances are those

symbolic actions by which the drama of life is played out. For Burke, long recognized as the seminal influence on the dramaturgical perspective, life is drama because humans are actors who construe their worlds through the symbols they create and use.[21] Natanson, adopting more of a phenomenological position, likewise views the "life-action" of the world as a "condensed rehearsal in on-going imagination of limits and possibilities."[22] And Duncan repeats the message in yet another way: "Social order is created and sustained in social dramas through intensive and frequent communal presentation of tragic and comic roles whose proper enactment is believed necessary to community survival."[23] These scholars, even working as they are from different perspectives, all invite us to take seriously (they would say "foundationally" or "ontologically") the notion that reality is brought "to life" in communicative performances.

These two streams of thought come together for us as we conceive of performances as those situationally relative and variable interactions by which organizational members construct organizational reality. But before we begin considering those organizational performances suggested by organizational literature and our own organizational research, we want to elaborate a bit more on what we believe are the crucial characteristics of performances.

Characteristics of Communicative Performances

Performances Are Interactional

Organizational performances are not soliloquies, but dialogues. They are always socially enacted by multiple participants. There are, of course, those performances like sales presentations or employee reprimands which invite us

to consider the talkers as "performers" and the non-talkers as "spectators." But even these monologues are interactional. "Spectators," Gronbeck reminds us, "are not sponges."[24] Talkers require listeners in the same way that leaders require followers. As Gronbeck puts it, "leader-status demands confirmation by witnesses."[25] Thus, both "performer" and "spectator" must be seen as adopting relevant organizational roles and jointly participating in bringing organizational reality to completion.

To view organizational communication as interactional performances offers a particularly new view of leaders and managers in organizations. For the most part, those who have studied managers have understated the interactional character of their work. The prevailing attitude in much of the literature is that managers "do things" as a consequence of their position in the hierarchy, and the responsibilities associated with it. Thus, we read that managers lead and managers inform and managers make decisions, and we are treated to a view of the "great man" school of management.[26]

In contrast to the individualistic character of the manager as the "great man," we prefer to emphasize the interactional features of managing. To say that managing is a communicative performance is to assume that managers are participants in, not sole proprietors of, certain organizational performances. Managers do not manage by themselves. They do not unilaterally make decisions; they participate in decision-making.[27] Kanter illustrates this point well when she reports the tongue-in-cheek comments of one secretary:

> One secretary to a top official in a small company said, "His wife does everything for him at home; I do everything for him here. The only thing he does for himself is...well, you know," she smiled, pointing toward the

washroom.[28]

Performances Are Contextual

The communicative performances of organizational life are contextual in that they are situationally embedded in the very reality they bring to completion. Garfinkel uses the expression "indexicality" to convey this sense of embeddedness.[29] "Indexicality" refers to the inherent contextual nature of any communicative interaction. Words have meaning only in some context, or, as Palmer has said, "one only uses the words already belonging to the situation."[30] This "situation" includes such features as who the participants are (for example, "manager" and "employee"), where the activity takes place (for example, "in the manager's office with the door closed"), and on what occasion the activity takes place (for example, "annual performance appraisal").[31] But it is important to remember that these situation features do not determine meaning. Instead, the performance and the situation mutually elaborate each other, or are "reflexive." As Leiter puts it in summary, "the setting gives meaning to the talk and behavior within it, while at the same time, it exists in and through that very talk and behavior."[32]

Communicative performances in organizations are also contextual in the sense that they are embedded in organizational history. That is, they take place in time and thus have both retrospective and prospective features.[33] A performance makes sense prospectively inasmuch as organizational members must or are willing to wait until later to understand more fully what is going on now. The significance of a "step 1 grievance meeting," for example, is often realized only when the parties meet again at "step 2." The retrospective feature of performances is that past performances make sense in light of what is disclosed in present performances. Thus, past performances embue the present with their specific meanings while the present, by its reconfiguration of the

past, transforms past meanings. In short, communicative performances are situationally and temporally embedded in organizational reality.

Performances Are Episodic

Communicative performances are name-able as distinct events. Although they may not have rigidly fixed beginnings or endings, these performances do have a certain unity about them. "Budget meetings," "performance reviews," "bitch or bullshit sessions," "tuning in to the rumor mill"--all are identifiable as discrete organizational performances. Such performances are, of course, related to the ongoing flow of past and future events, but the episodic nature of these performances is one way that individuals can punctuate the stream of organizational experience. Indeed, one need only open the appointment calendar of any manager to get a sense of the episodic flavor of his or her organizational experience.

In their elaboration of the "language action" paradigm, Frentz and Farrell discuss the notion of episode in some useful detail.[34] "An episode," they argue, "is a rule-conforming sequence of symbolic acts generated by two or more actors who are collectively oriented toward emergent goals."[35] Episodes, first, are "rule-conforming" (and we would add "rule-constituting") because the participants are choice-making individuals who act in ways that are rationally compelling, not conditionally compulsive. And, the rules which constrain choice in any organizational episode do not necessarily generalize "beyond the overall encounter-type in which they occur."[36] Finally, and most importantly, episodes have an encompassing form without which symbolic acts would be meaningless. "It is...the total episodic structure...which determines...communicative significance."[37]

Admittedly, episodes may seem to present some problems as units for analysis. Episodes are "flexible in content and collective in creative

origin" and simply "cannot be 'operationalized' in any reductive sense."[38] Episodes may begin haltingly, be interrupted, be transformed into some unexpected episode, or end inconclusively--any of which may make the episode as a unit of analysis more problematic than other units of analysis, say, a "3" on a Likert scale. But though episodes may not be "clean" units of analysis, this admission should not be seen as implying that episodes are analytically unrecognizable or unmanageable. Although they may be elusive operationally, episodes do have a conceptual and experiential integrity about them, and most episodes do display "structural imperatives" by which they reveal themselves as episodes.[39]

Performances Are Improvisational

Organizational performances differ perhaps most significantly from theatrical productions in that the lines of organizational members, unlike actors' lines, are not tightly scripted. Some performances--"meetings of the board," "executive succession ceremonies," "new employee welcome and orientation"--are in fact quite ceremonial and usually "invoke special ways of acting, special language, rules, and even boundaries,"[40] which give a sense of preplanning and rote execution of the performance. Other performances--"employee reprimands," "bitch sessions"--are similarly, though less formally, ritualized and may revolve around similar issues, similar sequences, and similar presentational styles. And repeat performances--from personal stories to employee instructions--can become quite structured and quite significant. Weiss describes this development in a federal agency:

> Many moves are improvisational. Faced with an event that calls for response, officials use their experience, judgment, and intuition to fashion the response for the issue at hand. That response becomes a precedent, and when

> similar--or not so similar--questions come up, the response is uncritically repeated. Consider the federal agency that receives a call from a local program asking how to deal with requests for enrollment in excess of the available number of slots. A staff member responds with off-the-cuff advice. Within a few weeks, programs in three more cities call with similar questions, and staff repeat the advice. Soon what began as improvisation has hardened into policy.[41]

But aside from these few exceptions, organizational performers rarely "memorize" their own lines and, though they may have general expectations about what others might say, they never know with exact certainty what the upcoming lines of those actors might be. As Goffman pointed out, "Although any conversational move is appreciably determined by the preceding moves of other participants, and appreciably determines the moves that follow, still much looseness is found; for at each juncture a whole range of actions seems available to the individual."[42] Organizational actors, thus, never have "complete knowability of the sequence-to-be," [43] and their performances must be seen as loosely scripted.

The improvisational tension of both "relatively loose" and "relatively tight" scripts has important implications for the study of organizational performances. Inasmuch as some performances are relatively tightly scripted, we may expect to be able to find some rather distinct "genres" of performance. Certain generic performances may share similar features, and these features should be explored. But given that many performances are relatively loosely scripted, we may then expect that even similar performances will be different in terms of content or in terms of the actual order in which the performance unfolds. Thus, loosely scripted performances, even those that can be classi-

fied together, have a uniqueness that ought not be ignored. The analytical directive, then, is to explore the uniqueness and variability of these performances.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCES: A HEURISTIC LIST

There are two traditional ways of talking about communicative performances in organizations. The first is to talk about the communicative performances that take place at each different systems level in the organization; that is, to look at individual performances, dyadic performances, group performances, and organization-wide performances. The second way is to use "common sense" managerial notions of communicative performances, and to talk about interviews, decision-making, performance appraisal, sales presentations, and the like. We do not find these ways of talking about communicative performances in organizations particularly useful, because they do not correspond or resonate with the cultural metaphor we are pursuing. They lack energy. So, instead, we propose to talk about performances as they have a place in organizational cultures--to talk about cultural performances. Our selection of types of performances for discussion comes from some interplay of our reading of organizational literature, and our own research experiences in organizations. The specific list of performances we present is meant to be heuristic, not exhaustive.

Organizational Communication as Ritual

Organizational culture is, in large part, constituted in the various rituals which members regularly or occasionally perform. These rituals orient members temporally, synchronizing their focus and introducing a sense of regularity into the culture. By participating in these rituals, members not only punctuate their experiences but are provided access to a particular sense of shared reality. As Abrahams has argued, "These events have a sense of wholeness and potential to them."[44] And, as Moore and Meyerhoff have pointed out, "...ritual and ceremony are employed to structure and present particular interpretations of social reality in a way that endows them with legitimacy."[45] Thus, rituals are one useful indicator of an organization's culture. We consider here four rituals: personal, task, social, and organizational.

Personal Rituals

> Each and every day, Lou Polito, owner and general manager of Lou Polito Dodge, opens all the company mail. On those occasions when he is "free," he personally delivers this mail to the appropriate divisions in the company. This is just his way of letting his people know that he is keeping in touch with what they're doing.

In every organization, individuals like Lou Polito develop their own unique ways of doing things, and these unique ways become endowed with a social significance that elevates them to the status of personal ritual. These personal rituals are "trademark" performances that not only solidify the actor's organizational identity, but inform and orient others to those identities.

Little is known about the personal rituals of most organizational members. Some performances of famous executives have been disclosed in the biographies of those people--like Mayor Daley's council meeting eruptions to

squelch an opponent or Vince Lombardi's film-room frenzies of breaking projectors and crushing tables or Lyndon Johnson's intimate gestures of affection[46]--and these performances, regularly performed in certain strategic circumstances, are not simply significant personality displays, but ritual-like displays of significance. There have also been a few published accounts of the performances of corporate executives--like Michael Blumenthal's (Bendix) memo deliveries or Robert Quittmeyer's (Amstar) occasional lunches in the company cafeteria--and these performances, likewise strategic and significant, are ritual-like.[47] But for the most part, the personal rituals of organizational members have not been discussed in the academic literatures. Instead, our literatures tend to discuss "employee attributes" or "management style," and overlook the unique richness of personal rituals. Personal rituals are not only the trademarks of identities and the source of reputations, both good and bad. But in their very demarcation as a specialized way of acting with claims to a particular kind of legitimacy, these personal rituals are often the critical incidents which we draw on when we talk about and make sense of particular organizational members, and hence, when we talk about and make sense of particular organizational cultures.

Task Rituals

> When a Valley View patrolman stops a driver for some traffic violation, he launches into a conversational routine that involves a question-answer sequence. "May I see your driver's license please?" "Is this your correct address?" "May I see your registration please?" "Do you know why I stopped you?" "Do you know what the speed limit is on this street?" "Do you know how fast you were going?" "Do you

> want to see the reading on the radar gun?" Although the officer has been taught this routine at the Police Academy as a way of being polite and professional, the Valley View police use it in order to see how the driver responds, to "size him up," and decide whether or not to give him any "breaks" in issuing a citation or warning.

Organizational members, like the Valley View police, continually reveal the practices for "getting the job done." These practices are the day to day routines members peform in order to call themselves "workers." In the beginning, such tasks are typically expressed formally by supervisors and policy manuals, but as one "learn the ropes," these formal prescriptions come to be adapted or seen "in a new light."

For the most part, this adaptation is tolerated and even expected by upper management. Employees, after all, are primarily appraised on their output, not on the nature of their performance, per se. Thus, in an attempt to meet acceptable standards, workers in various organizations find practical methods to issue tickets, keep records, prosecute criminals, and the like.[48] To some, it may seem inappropriate to treat "task performances" as rituals. Our treatment is not meant to suggest that tasks are unimportant. Rather, it is to suggest that most tasks are organized routinely and with a significance that transcends, or is at least far different from, managerial notions of "productivity."

Social Rituals

> Every Friday afternoon, the foremen from Steele Manufacturing go to the "Pub," one of the few places in their part of town that serves beer. The conversations are often filled with "shop talk" but can range from sports ("another

Jazz loss") to politics ("did ya hear the rumor that Robert Redford is gonna run for senator?")

Friday beer gatherings and other social rituals are recognized by most organizational researchers, but are rarely the focus of extended discussion. Typically, the recognition of such events is glossed under a section on "social functions" with the underlying presupposition that such functions relate to "satisfaction" and are thus potentially important because of their assumed impact on organizational functioning. Were it not for the presumption that social rituals lubricated the organizational machinery, there would likely be even less attention paid to them in the traditional literature.

Donald Roy, however, was one researcher who was concerned with the dynamics of social rituals in organizations, not for what they told us about impacts on productivity, but for what they told us about social performances. In his participant observations of machine shop operators, he found different "times" during which particular operators would perform varying acts--like "banana time" when one operator would make the daily theft of another's banana--and different "themes" which would accompany these acts--like the "kidding theme" where the operators would jokingly harrass each other.[49] These "times" and "themes," Roy argued, constituted a kind of social time-clock which punctuated the simple repetitive operations of the task and made working "livable." Moreover, he suggested, by participating in these social rituals, the operators created and displayed their oneness as a "natural group" or "subculture." Thus, these social rituals can perform the important function of identifying membership status in a group or organization.

Organizational Rituals

Each year, the department of communication has its annual picnic, highlighted by the traditional softball game which

> pits the graduate students against the faculty. Competition is typically fierce; but alas for the graduate nine, they haven't had but one win in the last five years.

Many ritual performances, like annual company picnics, are particularly revealing of organizational culture. These rituals are nearly "sacred," and their ceremonial structure is very difficult to modify. (Suggestions that the faculty/grad student game be dropped in favor of a less competitve game with randomly assigned teams generally go unheard.) This seeming immutable nature of some rituals suggests that they are events that fulfill not simply one function, but many. Thus, as Clifford Geertz claims, they are "texts" which articulate multiple aspects of cultural life.[50] For example, the Balinese cockfight is not merely a practice whereby wages are bet and statuses set, it is a text in which informed "readers" can discern the entire culture. In Geertz's words:

> It is the bringing of assorted experiences of everyday life to focus in the cockfight, set aside from life as "only a game" and reconnected to it as "more than a game," accomplishes, and so creates what, better than typical or universal, could be called a paradigmatic human event.[51]

Thus, company picnics, board of directors meetings, executive succession ceremonies, all have not only peculiar rules and rites but all have a particular capacity for revealing global features of an organization's culture.

In summary, personal, task, social, and organizational rituals are four performances that make up part of an organization's culture. These performances not only introduce a regularity into organizational experience, they are texts which display the significances of the culture.

Organizational Communication as Passion

The everyday activities which constitute organizational cultures, particularly those task rituals actors perform that allow them to call themselves "workers," are often quite boring. Such monotony is called to mind by Roy's description of the machine shop operator--a man, standing all day in one spot:

> looking out through barred windows at the bare walls of a brick warehouse, leg movements largely restricted to the shifting on body weight from one foot to the other, hand and arm movements confined, for the most part, to a simple repetitive sequence of place the die,--punch the clicker,--place the die,--punch the clicker, and intellectual activity reduced to computing the hours to quitting time.[52]

And when we think of the assembly line worker or the telephone operator or the cashier at the supermarket, we usually tend to think of similar monotonies.

But these workers are not the only organizational members who experience the tedium of the task. Workers in any bureaucracy, for example, must contend with the humdrum of committee meetings, budget sessions, typing marathons, and the like. Even those jobs glorified on television--doctors, lawyers, firemen--all have their moments of boredom.

Consider the police officer. The major portion of a policeman's working shift is rarely given to the chase scenes and shootouts seen on Hill Street Blues or Baretta. Police spend most of their working hours performing rather routine tasks--writing tickets, filling out forms, handling false alarms, and seemingly endless "cruisin'" the streets.[53] Yet, despite the apparent tedium of the task, a tedium the Valley View officers themselves would point out and

comment on, these same officers would depict their job as "exciting" and "addicting" and would boast that "once you've been a cop, you always want to get back in...it gets in your blood." In short, the activity of police work is typically uneventful, but the experience of being a cop is passionate.

The police are not the only workers who transform mundane events into organizational passions. From the managers who consider themselves "jungle fighters" of "coaches" or "nerve centers" to the secretaries who consider themselves "caged animals" or "team players" or "the real bosses," members of most organizational cultures frequently talk about their work in a way that transmutes mundaneity into passion. Thus, passions are not so much constituted in the organizational activities themselves, but in the heightened descriptions of these activities.

Storytelling

> The head of a young and growing advertising agency related a story that epitomized the spirit of creativity and risk-taking he felt was responsible for their present success. The story was quite lengthy, and recalled the time when the agency was making a pitch for a car dealer's account. Thinking that "there is nothing more boring than a standard car dealer's ad," this ad exec came up with the idea of doing a straight car ad and then at the end of the ad, hitting the announcer in the face with a cream pie, accompanied by a voice-over saying something like "if we can't beat the competition, then we'll be creamed." The pie-ing was something "catchy, something that would generate interest." In making the pitch to the car dealer, the exec decided it would be "fun" to have the car dealer read the ad, and when it got to the line about

> "getting creamed," they would "pie" the car dealer. As the car dealer was reading the script, the ad exec was chuckling to himself, not quite believing what they were about to do, and just as the car dealer said "we'll be creamed," the copy writer stood up and "pied," not the car dealer, but the ad exec. "Everybody was laughing! Everyone was in on it but me! The car dealer was laughing so hard he was crying. His sales manager was down on the floor on all fours! And, of course, we got the account. There was no way we weren't gonna get the account." What was most remarkable about this story was that we heard it told on several occasions by different organizational members, and that most of the story-tellers used many of the same gestures, particularly the shrugging shoulders representing the exec as he chuckled, not quite believing what they were about to do.

As exemplified by this anecdote, perhaps the primary performance in which memorable organizational experience is glorified as passion is the story-telling event.[54] Stories, as Labov and Waletsky have shown, "recapitulate experience verbally,"[55] providing members a vehicle for dramatizing organizational life. Organizational members exchange a variety of stories to glorify organizational experience. Personal stories are those which individuals tell about themselves, often accompanied by an underlying tone of one-upmanship, which embellish organizational identities. Many of the police we studied, for example, boasted about their invincibility as fighters and virility as lovers. Collegial stories are narratives which individuals share about other organizational members. These collegial stories cover a broad spectrum of experience, ranging from the amusing anecdotes of a newcomer's

initiation to more sobering accounts of member terminations, and everything in between. Because collegial stories are not typically sanctioned by management, these performances present the passions underlying the way the organization "really" works. Finally, there are corporate stories, narratives which represent the management ideology and are used to substantiate organizational procedures or pass on the unrecorded-but-managerially-favored customs of organizational life.[56] These corporate stories glorify organizational experience by weaving a particular historical texture into the organization and thereby redefine the organization symbolically. Thus, one does not work in the IBM building, one works in the IBM "family."

Storytelling performances are important because they typify certain experiences as being, in principle, worthy of emulation (when the story glorifies success) or deserving of caution (when the story accentuates failure). Thus, stories of organizational successes and "screw-ups" are not merely entertaining narratives, but are constitutive of organizational passions as they call attention to significant possible future scenarios.

Passionate Repartee

Organizational members can glorify their experience in ways other than the telling of stories. Each organizational culture has particular vocabularies used by its members. These vocabularies, sometimes called argots, tend to signify the salient features of organizational experience and to enliven them. The Valley View police, for example, do not deal with "civilians," but rather with "assholes, dirtbags, creeps, and maggots"--labels which serve as reminders that the "negative element" is so much a part of the everyday experience of being a police officer. Each organizational culture also has its sets of metaphors which "capture some of the distinctive, powerful, private realities" of that organization.[57] Many managers, for example, use a mili-

tary metaphor and "scout around, devise strategy, launch assaults, and win battles."

These vocabularies and metaphors are often employed by members in otherwise "normal" conversation, and their use transforms that moment of talk into drama. Thus, one Valley View officer might be informing an oncoming officer of what had happened during his shift. He then mentions a "motorcycle maggot" who tail-ended a VW, and information-sharing becomes a moment of drama. Similarly, one of his managers complains to Lou Polito about an uncooperative salesman and mentions that he told the man to "follow the chain of command or it'll get wrapped around your neck," and a problem with a subordinate gets transformed into a statement about the moral force that will be visited upon anyone who violates sanctified convention.

Organizational Communication as Sociality

Many communicative performances in organizations display a kind of cultural sociability, roughly formalized in organizational codes of behavior and guides to executive etiquette. Admittedly, there are those occasional hostile eruptions or flagrant romances but, in general, most organizational performances exhibit a social "smoothness" that encourages cooperative, but not intense, interactions with others. Indeed, it is this "smoothness," or "stylistic unity" as Bittner calls it,[58] that serves as a background against which organizational members recognize hostility and romance as "improper." There are four performances of sociality--courtesies, pleasantries, sociabilities, and privacies--that we wish to consider here.

Courtesies

Lou Polito spots an elderly couple in his showroom, the

> woman is crying softly. He asks his secretary what the problem is, and discovers that the couple is having some difficulty getting a special seat from a supplier that was part of the deal they made in buying a van. Lou rushes out to greet the couple, guides them into his office, calls the supplier, and gets the seat for them. When the woman thanks him, he says, "No trouble. When you buy a Lou Polito car, you buy me."

From the extra smiles on United Airlines to the private dinners at the country club, members of organizational cultures extend various courtesies to customers and to each other. These amenities are very important organizational performances, so important that they are often included in formal job descriptions and constitute bases for formal reviews. Bank tellers and flight attendants, for example, must find acceptable ways to perform such courtesies, to achieve what Erich Fromm calls a "commercialized friendliness,"[59] so that their formal performance appraisals attain certain levels.

These courtesy performances, of course, are not solely the domain of customer relations. Although clients and customers of most organizations do receive an exaggerated courtesy in exchange for their patronage, members of organizational cultures exchange such courtesies among themselves. From warm greetings from the boss to personal copies at the company copy machine, organizational members offer courtesies regularly, often with an implicit assumption that such offers ought to be reciprocated.[60] Courtesies performed regularly, especially when required formally or informally to maintain organizational membership, tend to succumb to what Goffman has called the "bureaucratization of the spirit."[61] In one company we are familiar with, a

supervisor would every morning walk down one row of desks, lay his hand on each desk and say "Good morning." At the end of the row, he would fill his coffee cup, and return via another row of desks, again laying his hand on each desk and saying, "Good morning." No other words were exchanged. The employees at each desk often would not even bother to look up as the supervisor passed.

Pleasantries

Pleasantries are those everyday performances known as "small talk" "chatter." These pleasantry performances are occasions during which members freely exchange talk on any number of topics--sports, weather, politics, or other news items.[62] Such pleasantries serve, in part, as "interpersonal pacifiers" and allow individuals to kill time in an enjoyable and nonthreatening manner. They are typically performed at a moment's notice--at a coincidental meeting at the water cooler, in an elevator, or in the parking lot after a day's work.

But pleasantries are not merely frivolous performances that just kill time. Pleasantries can also provide members a nonthreatening way to self-disclose and to learn each other's individual styles. Weick has suggested that the seemingly pointless conversation that opens and closes most meetings may in fact serve the useful function of clueing the participants into one anothers' working styles.[63] Additionally, as Knapp has offered, pleasantries can be "auditions" for social relationships because they can reveal the common ground upon which relationship can be built.[64]

Sociabilities

Sociabilities include those performances such as joking (particularly if the joke is in some sense "off color"), gossiping, "bitching," and talking shop" where the performance implies a certain level of intimacy that guaran-

tees that the talk will be understood for what it is. Even the apparent verbal abrasiveness of one police officer's locker-room hazing of another does not override the implied metacommunication of "play." Thus, sociabilities maintain themselves as "smooth" performances. These performances, while more than the interpersonal pacifiers of "idle chatter," are not yet exactly sensitive enough to require "behind closed doors" secrecy. In this formulation, sociabilities constitute much of what is heard as "social" (as opposed to "task") communication in organizations.

The ability to make one's sociable performances aesthetically pleasing is perhaps one of the prime requirements for what Weick calls the "management of eloquence."[65] One vice president of a utilities corporation we talked to described the "eloquence of the executive suite," which required as he saw it, "the ability to swear appropriately." He elaborated: "The chairman of the board at General Utilities is an elderly statesman type who can get into these tirades of swearing, but it adds a unique coat of elegance to his talk. Our controller, on the other hand, swears only when he's angry, and it is very unbecoming."

Privacies

Finally, there are the privacies, the "behind closed doors" performances considered more sensitive in nature. Confessing, supporting, consoling, criticizing--all are organizational performance more private in substance. Still, however, there is the expectation that these performances will be accomplished "smoothly," with as little "loss of face" as possible. Consider the performance appraisal interview. Most textbooks agree that the formal discussion of a subordinate's work behavior is a fairly sensitive matter and that care should be taken to see that the interview is conducted so as to minimize defensiveness. Criticism is to be instructive, job specific, and

comments should include both the good and the bad. One manager we interviewed put it this way: "You're dealing with a man's self-worth when you evaluate his work. You never tell a man his work isn't up to snuff. You lose all the psychological mileage out of him. Instead, you tell him in a very delicate way that at this particular point in time, his work could be better."

The most sensitive performances--like negotiations, performance appraisals, and firings--often have very delicate protocols. In "The Art of Firing an Executive," for example, Gooding goes into great length on the subtleties of how organizations let go of their executives so that no one "loses face."[66] But even those sensitive performances less ceremonial in nature--the exchanging of confidences and confessions--have similar requirements to preserve the "close-but-not-too-close" nature of organizationally sanctioned interpersonal relationships.

Organizational Communication as Politics

Any broad discussion of organizational communication must inevitably come to deal with issues of "power," "control," and "influence." Unfortunately, organizational researchers have been unable to agree on what these constructs mean in either a theoretical or empirical sense.[67] By treating organizational communication as politics, we do not attempt to provide any definitive conceptualization of these processes. Rather, our interest is in recognizing that organizational cultures are not monolithic, that there are sub-cultures of self-interests, and that many organizational performances are aimed at influencing others.

Showing Personal Strength

Members of any organizational culture have various ways of displaying their strength and their ability to "get things done." The most obvious performance of strength is the simple command or threat--when the boss says "do it" and it gets done. Such strength is often referred to as the "power of the position" and works when subordinates are willing to suspend critical judgment of those orders.[68] But as Perrow and others have suggested, the image of the "order barking boss" is not as typical as it once was, and "bosses" and other organizational members have found more subtle ways of showing strength.[69]

The performances for showing personal strength are as varied as the individuals who perform them. Some managers show personal strength by taking credit for certain organizational accomplishments. Other performances, like squeezing the budget to keep a program alive (particularly in recessionary times), display strength in a most convincing way. Some managers show their personal strength, not by squeezing budgets, but by squeezing people. As O'Day has pointed out, managers have various mechanisms--or as he calls them, "intimidation rituals"--for suppressing employees, including nullification, isolation, defamation, and expulsion.[70] We should add that managers are not the only organizational members who can display personal strength. When maintenance mechanics assume "rights" over engine repairs, secretaries assume "rights" over files, or computer techs assume "rights" over input or output, they display their personal strength by demonstrating another's dependence on them.[71]

Cementing Allies

Some of the political performances of organizational culture involve recruitment of allies and the establishment of relations with "loyal" others. Flagrant examples include the recruitment of "spies" reported by Pettigrew,[72]

or the appointment of boards of directors by presidents who do nothing but support them and thus serve, in Heineman's words, as "attractive ornaments on the corporate Christmas tree."[73]

But allies are often cemented in more delicate ways. Allies can be formed, for example, when courtesies and favors are reciprocated. These courtesies constitute the implicit contracts we bind with "sources," "informants," or others. In addition, we can cement allies when others agree, or fail to disagree, with our own position. Such agreements are metacommunicative statements of support and are the grist of most uncontracted alliances. Finally, we can cement allies by subtly testing others. The cops in Valley View, for example, talk "tough" with each other, and each initiation of a "tough talk" episode invites an officer to prove that he is ready to "stand with" another cop, both in spirit, and theoretically at the scene as well.

Some allies are particularly strong, so strong that they come to be labelled by other organizational members as such. Labelling binds relationships in a powerful way, creating the camps, factions, and coalitions of organizational cultures. These camps continually attempt to influence each other, and these attempts at influence are often constituted in performances of bargaining.

Bargaining

> As personnel director of a large manufacturing firm, Bill McCulloch is the management spokesman during formal grievance meetings between management and labor. "During grievance meetings," Bill says, "sparks may fly, which is good 'cause it gets everybody motivated and dealing with issues. We don't usually get too hostile, but hell, everybody's out for their own interest. Shit, if I was

them, I'd be trying to get the money too."

Bargaining, or negotiating, is the generic term used to describe the cultural performance wherein different parties come together in an effort to reach what are interpreted as inconsistent goals.[74] These performances range from the formal grievance meetings in Bill McCulloch's office to the more informal, but not necessarily less intense, conflicts among different organizational departments. But regardless of the level at which bargaining occurs, its performance can be generally characterized by what Sawyer and Guetzkow call "reciprocal argument and counter argument, proposal and counter proposal."[75]

Most work on bargaining has focused on the psychological impact of different bargaining tactics, but Donohue's interaction-based model of negotiating is useful in outlining some of the communicative performances of bargaining.[76] Donohue suggests that negotiations include three general communicative tactics. Attacking tactics discredit or modify an opponent's position and include such actions as threatening, discrediting, and offering alternative proposals. Defending tactics, on the other hand, hold off an opponent by rejecting the adequacy of a demand or by providing information to support one's own point of view. Finally, regressing tactics, unlike the other two, relinquish control of the negotiation by accepting the other's position or by revealing weaknesses.

Organizational Communication as Enculturation

For some time now, researchers have been interested in organizational enculturation.[77] Enculturation refers to those processes by which organizational members acquire the social knowledge and skills necessary to behave

as competent members. Enculturation occurs throughout one's organizational life (career), but some enculturation performances seem particularly meant for the organizational newcomer. By looking at organizational communication as enculturation, we want to emphasize thse communicative performances wherein the newcomer learns the social knowledge and skills of the culture.

In her discussion of organizational entry, Louis suggests that newcomers to organizations must acquire two basic kinds of knowledge.[78] The first, Louis argues, is a "role-related" knowledge by which newcomers recognize their position in the organization and the functions they must fulfill by being in that position. The second is a "more general appreciation" of organizational life, which implies an understanding of cultural nuance. We now turn to the communicative performances by which organizational members learn these two aspects--the "roles" and the "ropes"--of organizational culture.

Learning (and Teaching) the Roles

The enculturation performances for teaching the "roles" are ones specifically designed to prepare the newcomers, those members recently hired, transferred, or promoted.[79] These performances inform newcomers what particular activities should be done, how such activities should be done and, on occasion, why such activities should be done. In addition, these performances remind newcomers that they are indeed newcomers. Thus, they inform newcomers of both their function and status in the organizational culture.

There are two general performances for teaching the "roles" of an organization. Orientation performances are those formal performances by which newcomers learn the what, how, and why of job behavior. These formal performances include employment interviews, job training sessions, and indoctrination meetings.[80] Such orientations are typically followed by a probationary period

during which the newcomers are expected to display their new-found knowledge of company ways and their "commitment" to the organization.[81]

Initiation performances, on the other hand, are those less formal performances by which newcomers learn, sometimes all too clearly, that they are indeed newcomers. Initiations typically come in the form of harrassment by veteran members of the culture. "Rookies" in the Valley View police department refer to these hazing performances as "dead dog calls," a generic label for any unpleasant assignment but which gets its name from those occasions when rookies are dispatched to remove a dead dog from the street. The catch to these "dead dog" calls is that nearly everytime, a senior officer will time a "drive-by" just at the moment the rookie is lifting the carcass from the roadway. One rookie told a classic "dead dog" story:

> After I had been on the force for just a little over a month, the sergeant had me go on a call to investigate a drunk woman at a bar. When I got there, she was lying on the floor...out cold. She was about five feet tall and weighed about 300 pounds. I couldn't even budge her. Had to call for a back-up. When somebody came, they really gave it to me. (Mimicking the ridicule) "Hey, Rogers, what's wrong? Ain't you in shape?" I found out later her name is Debbie Hollings and whenever she gets so drunk she passes out, the owner of the bar calls the cops. They knew it was her all the time. Just wanted to give me the call so they could sit back and laugh.[82]

As with orientation performances, initiations usually include probationary periods during which the newcomers must take these hazings gracefully

before they are granted membership in the "informal" culture of the organization.

Learning (and Teaching) the Ropes

It is conventional wisdom that an organization is more than a collection of roles and the expression "learning the ropes" is frequently used to characterize the process by which organizational members come to understand the more intricate ways of organizational life.[83] Unfortunately, as Louis indicated, very little is known about the processes by which members acquire this "general appreciation" of an organizational culture.[84] But it seems to us that those enculturation processes which teach the subtleties of an organizational culture are themselves often very subtle.

There are, of course, those direct instructions of "let me tell you the way things really are around here," but learning the "ropes" is often the result of metacommunications on other everyday performances of organizational culture. That is, teaching and learning the ropes often occur as commentary on some previous performance of ritual, passion, sociality, or politics. A short example from the Valley View police may help to illustrate this metacommunicative character of "ropes" performances.

> Two patrolmen were talking in the Valley View station just after their shift had ended and Benson, one of the rookies, was listening in. The two officers talked about being on duty the whole night and how the only action went down at 6:15 when a guy, celebrating his 26th birthday, started getting rowdy.
>
> Hancock: I wished he invited me to that birthday party. I heard you say "he's thinking about swinging" and

I'm sayin' to myself, "swing, asshole, swing."

Davis: I may not have looked ready, but I was kinda hopin' he'd try something.

Hancock: I'd like to see what a flashlight would've done right between his eyes.

Davis: I'd've had to pick him out of the grill of my car first. That's where he was heading.

Most obvious in this episode is the "toughness" of the talk, a characteristic typical of the backstage banter at the station house, and as we mentioned before, this kind of performance by police is a political one that tests the worthiness of another cop to be an ally. What is important for our concerns now, however, is what follows as Davis walks over to the bulletin board where Benson, the rookie, is standing.

Benson: So Officer Davis almost mixed it up last night?

Davis: Not really. I didn't give the guy a chance to get mad at me.

We take Davis's interaction with Benson as a unique enculturation performance, a metacommunicative commentary that instructs Benson in how he should interpret the prior performance. This metacommunication informs the rookie that the prior exchange was not an endorsement of fighting, but was backstage "play." And, as the rookie observes more instances of this backstage "tough" talk, he comes to understand it as "not real," but serious nonetheless.

In short, as organizational members engage in the communicative performances of organizational life, they reveal through their implicit or explicit commentaries on those performances the subtleties of making sense in their particular culture. In the same way, as members perform the rituals of the

culture, they reveal the particular temporality of the place. As they perform the passions of the culture, they reveal the particular drama of the place. As they perform the socialities of the culture, they reveal the particular smoothness of the place. And, as they perform the politics of the culture, they reveal the particular strategies of the place. As these revelations continue to be interpreted and reinterpreted, the newcomer and the veteran (and the observer) can come to appreciate the subtleties of organizational culture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our purpose in this paper is to indicate a direction for future research in the organizational culture perspective that will yield a richer sense of the relationship between communication and organizations. Where most scholars have been content to document what the structure of a particular organizational culture is, we are encouraging an examination of how communication has brought that culture into being. We believe that the focus of such an examination needs to be on the communicative performances of organizations. By abstracting from current literature and by reflecting on our organizational research, we have come up with five such generic performances--performances of ritual, "passion," sociality, politics, and enculturation. Again, these five performances are meant to be heuristics for enriching our understanding of organizational culture. Their elevation to a "more than heuristic" status, of course, awaits systematic research.

Nonetheless, as we envision it, a cultural analysis of any particular organization would require the researcher to focus on communication as performance, and not simply as a display of underlying attitudes, beliefs,

knowledge or strategies of the culture. In urging a focus on communication as performance, we mean that a researcher must determine the variety of episodes that constitute a particular kind of performance and must look historically at the "playing out" of successive episodes for the accretion of significance that constitutes the meanings of the culture. Most importantly, the researcher must respect the improvisational nature of performances and look not so much for their invariant patterns, but for the variability in their patterns instead.

If such a research program were incorporated into existing organizational culture approaches, we would find some shifts in the nature of the research questions we would ask, compared to the kind of research questions we used to ask. There are three such shifts we can now anticipate.

First, as Linda Smircich has commented, many people think of culture as something an organization <u>has</u>.[85] Structural notions of culture are particularly vulnerable to the threat of being classified as one more variable influencing the functioning of the overall system. Top managers are being encouraged to shape up their "culture" in about the same way they have been encouraged to shape up their budgets.[86] The perspective offered here, with its focus on the performative and constitutive functions of communication, markedly changes our conception of organizational culture. Organizational culture is not just another piece of the puzzle, it <u>is</u> the puzzle. From our point of view, a culture is not something an organization has; a culture is something an organization is.[87]

Second, a focus on the invariant patterns of performances leads to a concern for classification and categorization. Although such a concern offers the very attractive possibility of finding generalizable performances <u>across</u> organizations, we may end up trading superficial generalizability for parti-

cular insights.[88] If, on the other hand, we pay attention to the variability in the patterns of performances, we can expect that we will develop a more subtle appreciation both of particular organizational cultures and the more general processes that bring them into being.

Finally, systems notions of organizations have tended to put a premium on thinking about communication as a short run phenomenon. Concern has been for the speed of transmission of a particular bit of information, and for the communication breakdowns that take place in particular here-and-nows. The organizational culture perspective, on the other hand, invites a re-ordering of perspective. Insofar as culture is an historical context that gives significance to all here-and-now performances, the most influential impacts of communication on organizations may occur over the long run.[89] Consequently, at the level of the particular performance, the issue may be one less of "effectiveness," and more of "eloquence."[90]

These shifts in the nature of the research questions that can be answered by the organizational culture approach suggest that it will complement, in the best sense of that word, our present knowledge about organizational communication. The organizational culture approach does not provide us another method to arrive at the same answers we already have. As an approach, it is not redundant with existing approaches. Instead, it expands the nature of our questions, and the answers it can provide--in conjunction with what we already know--may give us a larger and more varied picture of organizational communication.

Notes

[1] We were first introduced to this aspect of Langer's work in a discussion of the intellectual power of the concept of culture in Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[2] Ludwig von Bertalanffy, General Systems Theory (New York: Braziller, 1968), and Walter Buckley, Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

[3] Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 91.

[4] Karl E. Weick, "Middle Range Theories of Social Systems," Behavioral Science, 19 (1974), 357-367.

[5] Everett M. Rogers and Rekha Agarwala-Rogers, Communication in Organizations (New York: Free Press, 1976).

[6] For a critique of systems theory, see W. Charles Redding, "Organizational Communication Theory and Ideology: A Review," in Communication Yearbook 3, ed. Dan Nimmo (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979), pp. 309-341. For a call for a new theoretical orientation to the study of organizational communication, see Michael E. Pacanowsky and Nick O'Donnell-Trujillo, "Communication and Organizational Cultures," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 46 (1982), 115-130.

[7] Karl E. Weick, "Loosely Coupled Systems." Unpublished manuscript presented at the AERA Convention, April 1980.

[8] See Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo for a discussion of "organizational culture." Another somewhat different notion of "organizational culture" is provided by Andrew Pettigrew, "On Studying Organizational Cultures," Administrative Science Quarterly, 24 (1979), 570-581. As researchers have continued to develop the notion of organizational culture, there has been systematic work in tracing back the "roots" of the idea. For a suggestive review that finds "organizational culture" ideas in Elton Mayo's studies of the mule-spinning department of the Philadelphia textile mile and the Relay Assembly Room at the Hawthorne plant, see Carol S. Holzberg and Maureen J. Giovannini, "Anthrophology and Industry: Reappraisal and New Directions," Annual Review of Anthropology, 10 (1981), 317-360.

[9] See the entire December issue of Administrative Science Quarterly, 24 (1979), which was devoted to the use of qualitative methods in organizational research.

[10] Thomas C. Dandridge, Ian Mitroff, and William F. Joyce, "Organizational Symbolism: A Topic To Expand Organizational Analysis," Academy of Management Review, 5 (1980), 77-82; Alan L. Wilkins, "Organizational Stories as an Expression of Management Philosophy: Implications for Social Control in Organizations," Diss, Stanford University, 1978; Susan Koch and Stanley Deetz, "Metaphor Analysis of Social Reality in Organizations," Proceedings of the Conference on Interpretive Approaches to the Study of Organizational Communication, 26-29 July 1981 (West Lafayette, Indiana: Department of Communication, Purdue University, 1981); and Alan D. Meyer, "How Beliefs, Stories and Metaphors Uphold Ideologies that Supplant Structures and Guide Reactions," Proceedings of the Conference on Interpretive Approaches to the Study of Organizational Communication, 26-29 July 1981 (West Lafayette, Indiana: Department of Communication, Purdue University, 1981).

[11] For a parallel critique from the discipline of anthropology, see Victor Turner's review "The Word of the Dogon," in Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 156-165. Clifford Geertz, in Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 24, also expresses concern that anthropological analysis can become preoccupied with "formal symmetry" and become mere "academic bemusement" when the analysis fails to stay close to the data of everyday interaction.

[12] Geertz, p. 5.

[13]

[14] We were alerted to these two connotations by Dwight Conquergood in his "Communication as Performance," unpublished manuscript presented at the SCA Convention, Anaheim, November 1981.

[15] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Doubleday, 1959).

[16] Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Stories About Them," Critical Inquiry, (1980), 160.

[17] R. P. Cuzzort, Humanity and Modern Sociological Thought (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 175-192.

[18] For a discussion at this issue in a broader and more philosophical context, see Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society (Boston: Beacon, 1979).

[19] Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan, Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis (London: Heineman Press, 1979).

[20] Though we have drawn on Turner for inspiration, his use of performance is somewhat different from our own. Turner argues that these cultural performances spring from the deeper dramatic structure underlying all communities which he calls "social drama." Turner

describes "social dramas" as "units of a harmonic or disharmonic process, arising in conflict situations" sequenced in four phases: breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration. For example of organizational analysis based more directly on Turner's conceptions, see Pettigrew's "On Studying Organizational Cultures."

[21] Kenneth Burke, "Dramatism," in David L. Skills, ed., The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1968), 445-451.

[22] Maurice Natanson, "Man as an Actor," in Drama in Life, eds. James E. Combs and Michael W. Mansfield (N.Y.: Hastings House, 1976), p. 54.

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[74] Jack Sawyer and Harold Guetzkow, "Bargaining and Negotiation in International Relations," in International Behavior: A Social Psychological Analysis, ed. Herbert C. Kelman (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965).

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[78] Meryl Reis Louis, "Surprise and Sense Making: What Newcomers Experience in Entering Unfamiliar Organizational Settings," Administrative Science Quarterly, 25 (1980), 226-251.

[79] Van Maanen and Schein make the argument that socialization or enculturation occurs whenever anyone crosses any of a variety of types of organizational boundaries, and there is a process experienced not only by new-hires, but other organizational members as well.

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[85] Linda Smircich, "The Concept of Culture and Organizational Analysis," Proceedings of the Conference on Interpretive Approaches to the Study of Organizational Communication, 26-29 July 1981 (West Lafayette, Indiana: Department of Communication, Purdue University, 1981).

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[90] Weick, "Eloquence."